

HOUSE BILL 1128

By Naifeh

AN ACT to name a segment of State Route 19 in Haywood County in honor of the Reverend Dr. Clay Evans.

WHEREAS, from time to time, the members of this General Assembly have seen fit to name certain highways and bridges to honor those exemplary public servants who have contributed significantly to the growth and prosperity of their respective communities; and

WHEREAS, no Tennessean is more deserving of this honor than the Reverend Dr. Clay Evans, an eloquent minister of the Christian faith and an iconic civil rights leader; and

WHEREAS, a native of Brownsville and Haywood County, Dr. Evans is a product of the Woodlawn community and the historical Woodlawn Missionary Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, in 2000, the Reverend Evans took a much deserved retirement after fifty years of inspirational leadership as pastor of Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois; and

WHEREAS, the Reverend Evans founded the Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church after he was ordained as a minister in 1950; and

WHEREAS during those fifty fruitful years, Dr. Evans ministered faithfully to the spiritual needs of innumerable Christians, and under his outstanding leadership, the Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church provided enlightenment, hope, and support to the people of Chicago; and

WHEREAS, Pastor Evans has received numerous Honorary Doctor of Divinity degrees and has been responsible for helping to launch the ministerial careers of more than one hundred persons, including six female ministers; and

WHEREAS, he is the founding president of the Broadcast Ministers Alliance of Chicago and the African-American Religious Connection and has served with distinction as a board

member of the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Incorporated; and

WHEREAS, a role model for religious leaders in the tradition of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Dr. Evans has been a dynamic leader in the Civil Rights Movement since 1965; he is the founding national board chairman of Operation PUSH and has served as its chairman emeritus for the last thirty-four years; and

WHEREAS, an accomplished scholar and theologian and a man of many talents, Reverend Evans is also a featured soloist on numerous albums of the 250-voice Choir of Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church and has written an autobiographical book, *From Plough Handle to Pulpit*; and

WHEREAS, he has been honored with the Reverend James Cleveland Award and the Stellar Award for Album of the Year; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Evans also produced his own radio broadcast for forty-eight years and a syndicated telecast for twenty-three years; and

WHEREAS, in 1975, Reverend Evans founded the Clay Evans Scholarship Fund to provide financial assistance to students with a burning desire to succeed by furthering their professional studies; for the past thirty-five years, the Fund has provided eighty-five scholarships to the children of Brownsville and Haywood County; and

WHEREAS, a man of spiritual depth and devotion, Pastor Evans has performed countless ceremonies and has prayed for and counseled the members of Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church during their hardships and in times of bereavement; and

WHEREAS, aptly described by President Bill Clinton as "a steadfast and inspiring spiritual leader," Reverend Evans has "worked tirelessly to ensure that all Americans enjoy the same political, social, and economic opportunities and justice," in the words of Vice President Al Gore; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Evans worked closely with Reverend Jesse Jackson in building support among Chicago's ministers for Dr. Martin Luther King's civil rights campaign there in 1965-1966; Reverend Jackson was so impressed by Reverend Evans and his spiritual message that he joined the Fellowship congregation; and

WHEREAS, the two civil rights pioneers became close friends during Dr. Evans's illustrious tenure as the first board chairman of Operation PUSH, and Reverend Jackson has often referred to Dr. Evans as "my Moses"; and

WHEREAS, because the Reverend Dr. Evans found the Lord as a child at Woodlawn Missionary Baptist Church, this General Assembly wishes to name a segment of State Route 19 near this church in his native Haywood County to honor this humble man of God and his monumental contributions to religious faith and civil rights in American society; now, therefore, BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, the segment of State Route 19 in Haywood County from such route's intersection with Woodlawn Road to its intersection with Small Road is hereby designated "Reverend Clay Evans Road" as a lasting tribute to one of the greatest religious and civil rights leaders this state has ever produced.

SECTION 2. The department of transportation is directed to erect suitable signs or to affix suitable markers designating the segment of State Route 19 described in Section 1 as the "Reverend Clay Evans Road."

SECTION 3. The erection of such signs shall be within the guidelines prescribed by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

SECTION 4. This act shall become operative only if the federal highway administrator advises the commissioner of transportation in writing that the provisions of this act shall not render Tennessee in violation of federal laws and regulations and subject to penalties prescribed therein.

SECTION 5. This act shall become operative only if the cost of the manufacture and installation of such signs is paid to the department of transportation by Haywood County within one (1) year of the effective date of this act. Such payment shall be made prior to any expenditure by the state for the manufacture or installation of such signs. The department shall return any unused portion of the estimated cost to Haywood County within thirty (30) days of the erection of such signs. If the actual cost exceeds the estimated cost, an amount equal to the difference in such costs shall be remitted to the department by Haywood County within thirty (30) days of the county receiving an itemized invoice of the actual cost from the department.

SECTION 6. The appellation "Reverend Clay Evans Road" provided for in this act is for honorary purposes only and nothing contained herein shall be construed as requiring the alteration of any address or the governmental system for assigning addresses in any county, municipality, or other governmental entity affected by this act.

SECTION 7. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.